

MEETING MINUTES
Stow Green Advisory Committee
Monday, December 20, 2021

Zoom meeting only

Committee Members Attending:

Arnie Epstein – Committee Chair, Energy Manager, Sharon Brownfield – Vice Chair, Appointed by Energy Manager, Carol Lynn – Clerk, Resident At-Large Representative for the Select Board, John Colonna-Romano – Planning Board, John Sangermano – Resident At-Large

Absent:

Bob Collings – EDIC, George Peterman – Resident At-Large, Tom Porcher – Conservation Commission, Michael Naill – Zoning Board of Appeals

Residents Attending:

Kate Fisher
Jesse Steadman, Town Planner,
Kathy Sferra, Conservation Director

The meeting was rescheduled from 12-16-21 to 12-20-21.

Meeting called to order on 12-20-21 as a Zoom-only meeting at 7:10 pm.

Agenda

1. Review of minutes from 12-02-2021.

- a. Minutes approved with suggested edits.
- b. Move for approval – John Sangermano
- c. Seconded – Colonna-Romano
- d. All – unanimous Aye

2. Resident Items

- a. Katie Fisher is working on green activities aimed at kids. She is willing to help the Green Advisory Committee (GAC) with ideas in this regard.

3. Clarification regarding responsibility for town climate resiliency and adaptation. (Jesse Steadman, Town Planner)

- a. Jesse Steadman suggested that the GAC include adaptation and resilience in the Climate Action Plan (CAP), if the committee thinks it's appropriate. It's more difficult for natural resources to receive attention because they often don't have metrics similar to energy issues. Arnie will bring this up at the meeting in January with the Select Board, since this wasn't initially discussed as part of the GAC purview.
- b. MAGIC (Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination, which works collectively to address issues related to transportation, economic development, conservation of natural resources, and housing), is reaching out to other local

planning groups. A large part of the group's focus is on water resources, including issues like heat and drought, storm water management, and flooding.

- c. Jesse would like to work with and get feedback from the Climate Advisory Committee regarding planning issues. Going forward, the town will have tough decisions regarding adaptation and resilience, and it will help to have the GAC review, and possibly research in depth, issues.
- d. Jesse would welcome someone from the GAC to join the Climate Resiliency Coalition in the Magic Region meetings.

4. Update on Stow Acres and Athens Lane developments (Jesse Steadman, Arnie Epstein)

- a. Athens Lane will probably submit an application this winter to the planning board, which will go to all pertinent committees, including the GAC. Once the application is submitted, we will know the details regarding weatherization and use of fossil fuels in the housing development.
 - i. The last discussion with Bruce Wheeler from Habitech was very positive. Bruce had reached out to the developers at the Devons green housing project. He thought Habitech could incorporate some of the energy-savings items they saw at Devons. Habitech is not yet willing to share the details of their plans since they are still in the planning process.
 - ii. John Colonna-Romano: The developer initially felt uncomfortable about the cost/sell values of fossil-fuel-free housing but felt better about it after speaking with the Devons contacts we provided.
 - iii. The developer is also concerned about whether Low and Moderate Income (LMI) buyers will be interested in energy-efficient housing.
 - iv. It's possible that the Athens Lane development could still rely on oil heat.
- b. Stow Acres issues will be administered by the Zoning Board. The application for affordable housing has been submitted.
 - i. Jesse is willing to share with the GAC what is currently in the documents regarding green energy and appliances. There aren't a lot of details yet.
 - ii. Athens Lane development is further along than Stow Acres regarding green energy considerations.
 - iii. Kathy Sferra mentioned the Municipal Vulnerability Application for the North Course of Stow Acres. They are currently looking for sources of money for this project and are designing a resiliency plan for the landscape. The full application is due in May. They expect to submit a pre-application/expression of interest sometime in the next few weeks, and have been working with OARS, SVT, and SCT on this.
 - iv. Kathy would like to speak with the GAC about this at a future meeting. Arnie asked if the application for grants would be enhanced if the developers built green housing.
- c. Both developers are in the stage of looking at options and costs, and are running numbers.

- d. The question was raised regarding who is responsible for updating existing affordable homes to be energy efficient. The group agreed that a conversation about this needs to get started.
- e. Jesse: It would be helpful to have some conversations with other towns to learn how they are managing current housing retrofits.

5. Report on meeting with HLPD and Green Hudson (Arnie Epstein)

- a. Arnie, George, and Bob met with HLPD and Green Hudson on 12/6/21.
 - i. HLPD doesn't have a lot of interest in supporting Muni or residential solar in and of itself.
 - ii. HLPD is interested in combining solar with Muni or residential storage to help with peak shaving.
 - iii. HLPD showed interest in a microgrid backup for power outages or extreme weather events.
 - iv. Items ii and iii above would serve the dual purpose of providing town resiliency and provide HLPD with a power source during peak times ("shave the peak"). This is similar to what Acton did at one of their schools.
- b. Arnie mentioned plans to discuss with HLPD the possibility of increasing the scope and amount of incentives/rebates for municipalities, including EV chargers, heat pumps, and weatherization. These are the first of what he expects to be multiple requests for HLPD to help its towns become less reliant on fossil fuels. He doesn't believe the proposals will have a substantial impact on current electricity rates.
- c. Members of Green Hudson met with their select board to establish a Green Advisory Committee for Hudson.
- d. Green Hudson is collaborating with the Stow GAC in meetings with HLPD. Arnie, George, and Bob, from Stow, and Green Hudson will meet jointly with HLPD to discuss the possibility for an incentive/discount to developers to put in energy-efficient housing. This could potentially include lowering the cost of running new electric lines (a substantial cost for developers). Owners of all-electric homes will use more electricity (instead of gas or oil), which will benefit HLPD. The current question is what is HLPD's expectation of an ROI over time?
- e. John Sangermano asked whether HLPD would want to run a program like HeatSmart. Would they consider a rate increase to pay for a substantial rebate for residential heat pumps? Arnie said this type of program is unlikely to come from Municipal light plants, but there is some discussion currently in the State Legislation to create a State program similar to the current Mass Save program (which is not available to Muni customers).
- f. The next meeting with HLPD will be in early January.
- g. Jesse asked to be updated on the results of the January meeting with HLPD. He also suggested that there be another meeting with the developers after the upcoming HLPD meeting.

- h. Sharon requested that Arnie write up a summary of the meeting with HLPD, and suggested that all meetings pertinent to GAC discussions and plans are summarized and placed in the GAC google drive.

6. Meeting with Police Chief Sallese on 12-10-21 regarding support for purchase of a hybrid police cruiser (George, Sharon, Carol)

- a. The Stow police department is a small department where the Chief also has to act as a patrol officer at times. There is generally one officer on night shift.
- b. The vehicle has to be all-wheel drive, sustain high running time (the car needs to be running constantly during an incident), and needs to be large enough to accommodate people of different sizes as well as the substantial amount of equipment needed in a patrol car. He is looking to purchase a hybrid Police Interceptor (Explorer) SUV.
- c. Due to extended run-time needs, an all-electric car is not practical at this time.
- d. Due to modifications made to new vehicles, the Chief can't transfer the equipment in an old vehicle over to the new vehicle. He will need to pay for the new "police package" to be installed in the new vehicle. It takes eight weeks for the equipment to be installed.
- e. Chief Sallese is supportive of having charging stations in the parking lot. For example, one could be behind the building for police use, and another near the entrance for visitors to the station.
- f. Stow police vehicles are generally kept for two years past their normal warranty duration.
- g. The Stow Police Department is currently down two vehicles.
- h. Arnie: Green Communities funds are available for police cruisers, to the amount of \$5000.00 per cruiser. The application needs to be submitted in April, for the State to reply by late summer. If the Chief needs to rely on a Green Communities grant, he won't be able to spend money on a cruiser until he is notified regarding the status of the grant in September (whether he will receive funds or not, and how much if yes). They are currently working on the grant application.
- i. Chief Sallese asked for support from the GAC at the next town meeting for the Police Department to purchase a hybrid.

7. Discussion whether to request the Select Board to adopt a resolution requiring new and renovated municipal buildings to not use fossil fuels.

- a. There are no state regulations to mandate that developers do not put in fossil fuel-using appliances and systems in residential and commercial buildings. Towns do, however, have control over construction of municipal buildings.
- b. Arnie asked which towns have already adopted a resolution requiring new and renovated municipal buildings to not use fossil fuels. Wellesley, and Lexington have done this through their Select Boards. Ipswich did this through their Select Board and their school committee. Amherst did this through a bylaw.
- c. We agreed to investigate which other towns have done this and by which path.
- d. More research needs to be done to determine if the town can mandate this for school buildings. While school buildings located in Stow are owned by the town, the school district is regional. Green Community grants also apply to schools but

have to go through the school district. Arnie will discuss this with Frank Ramsbottom, Stow Building Commissioner / Facility Manager, prior to bringing a proposal to the Select Board. Arnie will also ask Denise what other town committees/groups he should discuss this with.

- e. John Sangermano volunteered to write up a draft proposal to bring to the January 6th GAC meeting.
- f. A building electrification accelerator coalition is developing in Massachusetts that consists of 15+ communities (not MetroWest only) to help them go all-electric for new construction.

8. Discussion regarding a non-binding resolution warrant article to align Stow with the emissions reduction targets in the State climate – postponed until January.

9. MAPC consultant: Jesse Way

- a. Jesse will consult with Stow on developing a Climate Action Plan, including setting target dates and how to organize ourselves.
- b. He will attend the January 6th GAC meeting.
- c. We will ask Jesse about expanding the CAP to include resilience and adaptation.

10. Next two months will be Zoom-only meetings.

- a. Sharon moved that, due to the present COVID surge, all GAC meetings be held as Zoom meetings until the end of February.
- b. Seconded by John Sangermano.
- c. Approved by all present.

11. Meeting Agenda for January 6, 2022

- a. Review of minutes from 12-20-2021.
- b. Resident's Items.
- c. Jesse Way, MAPC consultant: Climate Action Plan process, expectations, strategies, and community engagement.
- d. Discuss presentation to the select board regarding the adoption of a resolution requiring new municipal building construction and renovations to not include fossil fuels for heating, hot water, and/or cooking.
- e. HLPD update.
- f. Updates on Concord and Acton Climate Action Plan process.
- g. Budget process: Discuss what items/actions require funding. Examples include events for residents' input, education sessions, etc.
- h. New Business
- i. Adjourn

12. Adjourned at 9:00 pm